

Hill Backs Employees' Rights Bill

By Mike Causey

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The Senate yesterday passed a watered-down version of the so-called Federal employee bill of rights by a 79-to-4 vote. The bill now goes to the House where it faces an uncertain future.

It would prohibit most agencies from using lie detectors or psychological tests on employees and would exempt most workers from making financial disclosure statements or from pressure to join charity or bond drives.

Behind-the-scenes pressure from the intelligence agencies caused approval of an amendment that would give both the Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency wide authority to use such tests in matters of "national security."

The FBI would be given the same authority although the agency says it does not use either testing method on its employees.

Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) argued against the amendment to his bill. He said the widespread use of the lie detector is a 20th Century belief in witchcraft, and has no place in Government personnel or security programs.

Members of the CIA watchdog subcommittee argued vigorously that the lie detector, or polygraph, does indeed have a place in the personnel methods of intelligence agencies. They won their amendment by a voice vote. It permits the CIA or NSA director "or his designee" to approve the tests.

As approved by the Judiciary Committee, the Ervin bill would have required the two administrators to make a "personal finding with regard

to each individual" employee before the tests could be used.

Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) said the lie detector helped CIA spot "over 100 definite security risks" in pre-employment tests last year.

Sen. John Stennis (D-Miss.) said the fact that the FBI does not use the tests on its employ-

ees doesn't mean the CIA shouldn't use them. Stennis said he assumed that the FBI hires only employees of "the highest character," while the CIA, because of its mission, does not always want or get workers "of the very top character."

In addition to prohibiting polygraph and psychological tests, the bill would forbid Federal agencies or officials to:

- Require job applicants to disclose race, religion or national origin other than proof of citizenship.
- Force employees to attend briefings, lectures or meetings not related to their work, or to take part in outside activities not related to their jobs.
- Make disclosures of personal finances, worth or debts of themselves or family members, except where there might be a conflict of interest between outside financial activities and their Federal jobs.

Government officials found guilty of violating employees' rights could be suspended for 15 days without pay for the first offense, and could be given 30-day suspensions or be fired for continued offenses.

Ervin's bill, which has the heavy support of most Federal employe unions, would set up a three-member bipartisan Board of Employee Rights to police the program. Members would hear cases, and make regular reports to the Congress.

Insiders believe Administration officials will seek further modification of the bill in the House, or try to stall action on it this year. Federal officials contend there are already enough administrative regulations to safeguard employee rights.

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